



## The Illinois Department of Corrections

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### **Policy Change Reduces Employment Barriers for Ex-Offenders**

(Springfield, IL) - The Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR) and the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) are pleased to announce a new initiative that streamlines the professional licensing process for men and women who are being released from prison.

Starting immediately, offenders who've completed the required coursework for Barbering and Cosmetology will be able to apply for their professional license and meet with the licensing board via video conference up to six months before their release or parole date. This common sense policy change reverses the previous approach, which prohibited offenders from starting the application process until they were already released from the institution.

"By creating a pathway towards licensure while still in the institutional setting, we are able to provide near immediate opportunity for individuals exiting prison," said Bryan A. Schneider, IDFPR Secretary. "We believe this regulatory revision provides real change for those leaving incarceration, while supplying our local economies with able bodied employees at the ready."

"This is a step in the right direction as we work toward reducing the recidivism rate in Illinois," said IDOC Acting Director John Baldwin. "When men and women know they'll be rewarded for their hard work, they are more inclined to participate in programming that will improve their odds of success in the community. This new policy means offenders will be able to join the workforce as soon as they walk out of the correctional center doors."

This effort is a direct response to the Illinois Criminal Justice and Sentencing Commission's recommendation to "remove unnecessary barriers to those convicted of crimes from obtaining professional licenses." It is a small but critical first step in reducing employment barriers for ex-offenders and driving down the prison population in the state of Illinois.

Interviews and b-roll of Cosmetology students at Logan Correctional Center are available on the IDOC Facebook page and on the CMS website at <http://www.illinois.gov/cms/agency/media/video/>.

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*Mission: To serve justice in Illinois and increase public safety by promoting positive change in offender behavior, operating successful reentry programs, and reducing victimization.*

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